



## Indoor microbiome, microbial and plant metabolites, chemical compounds, and asthma symptoms in junior high school students: a multicentre association study in Malaysia

Yu Sun <sup>(1,2,6,7)</sup>, Mei Zhang<sup>1,6</sup>, Zheyuan Ou<sup>1</sup>, Yi Meng<sup>1</sup>, Yang Chen<sup>1</sup>, Ruqin Lin<sup>1</sup>, Jamal Hisham Hashim<sup>3</sup>, Zailina Hashim <sup>(1,2,6,7)</sup>, Gunilla Wieslander<sup>5</sup>, Qingsong Chen<sup>2</sup>, Dan Norbäck <sup>(1)</sup> and Xi Fu<sup>2,7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Guangdong Provincial Key Laboratory of Protein Function and Regulation in Agricultural Organisms, College of Life Sciences, South China Agricultural University, Guangdong Laboratory for Lingnan Modern Agriculture, Key Laboratory of Zoonosis of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Guangzhou, PR China. <sup>2</sup>Guangdong Provincial Engineering Research Center of Public Health Detection and Assessment, School of Public Health, Guangdong Pharmaceutical University, Guangzhou, PR China. <sup>3</sup>Dept of Environmental Health and Occupational Safety, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universiti Selangor, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. <sup>4</sup>Dept of Environmental and Occupational Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia. <sup>5</sup>Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Dept of Medical Science, University Hospital, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden. <sup>6</sup>Yu Sun and Mei Zhang contributed equally to this work. <sup>7</sup>Yu Sun and Xi Fu contributed equally to this article as lead authors and supervised the work.

Corresponding author: Xi Fu (fuxi@gdpu.edu.cn)



Shareable abstract (@ERSpublications) Natural metabolites (plant-derived flavonoids and isoflavonoids, and micro-organism-derived indole and derivatives) and synthetic chemicals in the indoor environment are important for the development of asthma symptoms. https://bit.ly/3wjfC8g

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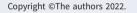
## Abstract

*Background* Indoor microbial exposure is associated with asthma, but the health effects of indoor metabolites and chemicals have not been comprehensively assessed.

*Methods* We collected classroom dust from 24 junior high schools in three geographically distanced areas in Malaysia (Johor Bahru, Terengganu and Penang), and conducted culture-independent high-throughput microbiome and untargeted metabolomics/chemical profiling.

**Results** 1290 students were surveyed for asthma symptoms (wheeze). In each centre, we found significant variation in the prevalence of wheeze among schools, which could be explained by personal characteristics and air pollutants. Large-scale microbial variations were observed between the three centres; the potential protective bacteria were mainly from phyla Actinobacteria in Johor Bahru, Cyanobacteria in Terengganu and Proteobacteria in Penang. In total, 2633 metabolites and chemicals were characterised. Many metabolites were enriched in low-wheeze schools, including plant secondary metabolites flavonoids/ isoflavonoids (isoliquiritigenin, formonnetin, astragalin), indole and derivatives (indole, serotonin, 1*H*-indole-3-carboxaldehyde), and others (biotin, chavicol). A neural network analysis showed that the indole derivatives were co-occurring with the potential protective microbial taxa, including *Actinomycetospora*, *Fischerella* and *Truepera*, suggesting these microorganisms may pose health effects by releasing indole metabolites. A few synthetic chemicals were enriched in high-wheeze schools, including pesticides (2 (3*H*)-benzothiazolethione), fragrances (2-aminobenzoic acid, isovaleric acid), detergents and plastics (phthalic acid), and industrial materials (4,4-sulfonyldiphenol).

*Conclusions* This is the first association study between high-throughput indoor chemical profiling and asthma symptoms. The consistent results from the three centres indicate that indoor metabolites/chemicals could be a better indicator than the indoor microbiome for environmental and health assessments, providing new insights for asthma prediction, prevention and control.



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